

# **Administrative Careers With America**

## **Background Information and Sample Questions for the Examination for**

### *Careers in Benefits Review, Tax, and Legal Occupations*

**Office of Personnel Research and Development**



**United States  
Office of  
Personnel  
Management**

Career  
Entry  
Group

AN 3694  
Spring 1992

# U.S. Office of Personnel Management

## *Administrative Careers With America*

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR THE EXAMINATION FOR CAREERS IN BENEFITS REVIEW, TAX, AND LEGAL OCCUPATIONS

One process for filling entry-level jobs in the Benefits Review, Tax, and Legal occupations requires competitive selections from a pool of applicants according to merit system principles. The examination for these occupations is composed of a written test of job-relevant abilities and a questionnaire dealing with biographical information called the *Individual Achievement Record (IAR)*. By combining these measures, the examination provides a comprehensive index of your probable job success.

This booklet describes the written test and the *IAR*. The written test and the *IAR*, together, will take approximately three and one-half hours to complete.

### THE WRITTEN TEST

**Purpose of the Test.** The written test is designed to measure: 1) the ability to understand language; and 2) the ability to use reasoning in the context of language, as well as to solve quantitative problems and problems presented in tabular form.

**Preparing for the Test.** The written test is divided into two parts. Part A is composed of a Vocabulary section and a Reading section. Part B is composed of a Tabular Completion section and an Arithmetic Reasoning section. It is very important that you study the four types of sample questions included in this booklet before the examination. It is advisable to do this repeatedly over a period of time to become familiar with the item types.

**Time Limits.** In each part of the test, a reasonable amount of time is included for the careful reading of the instructions. Be sure to use this time well. Each part of the test has a definite time limit. There is enough time for most people to answer every question. Nonetheless, some questions may be more difficult than others. Do not spend an excessive amount of time on one question to the detriment of your total test performance. You can always go back to a skipped question if you finish a part of the test before the time limit for that part is over. To ensure that you have time to answer every question, you should keep track of the time by periodically checking your watch or the room clock. Also, the examiner will tell you when you have ten minutes left before the end of each part. If you find that the time is almost up and you have left one or more questions unanswered, make an intelligent guess on the answers and mark them in the answer booklet. Your score will not be lowered for wrong answers in this test; rather, your score will be based on the total number of items that you answer correctly.

**Answering the Questions.** First, read each question very carefully. Then, read the alternative responses given and, if you know the correct answer, darken the corresponding space in the answer booklet. If a question appears especially difficult, you may choose to leave it and return to it later before time is called. If you do skip a question, be sure to skip the corresponding number in the answer booklet. (A copy of the first page of the answer booklet appears at the end of this publication as a reference for

you.) If, after the test, you think you did not answer all the questions correctly, do not be discouraged. No applicant is expected to answer every question correctly.

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS

The questions selected as sample questions for the written test are similar to the questions you will find in the actual test in terms of difficulty and form. In general, the test questions deal with topics related to Government business which you would be likely to encounter in the performance of jobs in the Benefits Review, Tax, and Legal occupations. Remember, however, that *knowledge of any job-specific subject matter is NOT required to answer the questions correctly.*

### PART A: VOCABULARY AND READING

The total time allotted for Part A is 50 minutes. Part A will consist of fifteen vocabulary questions and twenty reading questions. It should take you about 5 minutes to answer the vocabulary questions, which would leave you 45 minutes for the reading questions. Do not spend much more than five minutes on the vocabulary questions, since this would cut into the time you have for answering the reading questions. However, if you finish Part A before the allotted time is over, you should review your answers in both the Vocabulary and the Reading sections, especially any answers about which you were uncertain.

#### VOCABULARY QUESTIONS

Federal jobs in the Benefits Review, Tax, and Legal occupations require you to communicate well both in written and spoken language. Consequently, a good vocabulary is important for successful job performance. The following questions present a key word and five suggested answers. Your task is to find the suggested answer that is closest in meaning to the key word. Wrong answers may have some connection with the word, but their meanings will be essentially different from that of the key word. Sample questions 1 and 2 are examples of the vocabulary questions in the test.

1. *Stipulation* means most nearly

- |                            |                        |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| A) essential specification | D) required training   |
| B) unnecessary addition    | E) required correction |
| C) unnecessary effort      |                        |

The word *stipulation* refers to a required condition or item specified in a contract, treaty, or other official document. Therefore, response A, *essential specification* is the best synonym. A *stipulation* could be an *addition* to a contract or other document, but even without *unnecessary*, response B is incorrect. Responses C and D are clearly unrelated to the meaning of *stipulation*. Response E, *required correction*, shares with *stipulation* the idea of being necessary, as well as an association with something written. However, a *correction* is an alteration made to remedy or remove an error or fault, so its basic meaning is completely different from that of *stipulation*.

2. *Allocation* means most nearly

- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| A) prevention | D) assignment |
| B) site       | E) ointment   |
| C) exchange   |               |

An *allocation* is the act of setting something apart for a particular purpose. Response D, *assignment*, refers to the act of specifying or designating something exactly or precisely, and is, therefore, the best synonym for *allocation*. Responses A, C, and E are clearly unrelated to the meaning of *allocation*. Response B, *site*, means to put something in a location or position; however, the emphasis with *site* is on the physical location given to an object, rather than on the purpose of the object.

### READING QUESTIONS

In each of these questions you will be given a paragraph which contains all the information necessary to infer the correct answer. Use **only** the information provided in the paragraph. Do not speculate or make assumptions that go beyond this information. Also, assume that all information given in the paragraph is true, even if it conflicts with some fact known to you. Only one correct answer can be validly inferred from the information contained in the paragraph.

Pay special attention to negated verbs (for example, "are not") and negative prefixes (for example, "incomplete" or "disorganized"). Also pay special attention to quantifiers such as "all," "none," and "some." For example, from a paragraph in which it is stated that "it is not true that all contracts are legal," one can validly infer that "some contracts are not legal," or that "some contracts are illegal," or that "some illegal things are contracts," but one **cannot** validly infer that "no contracts are legal," or that "some contracts are legal." Similarly, from a paragraph that states "all contracts are legal" and "all contracts are two-sided agreements," one can infer that "some two-sided agreements are legal," but one **cannot** validly infer that "all two-sided agreements are legal."

Bear in mind that, in some tests, universal quantifiers such as "all" and "none" often give away incorrect response choices. That is **not** the case in this test. Some correct answers will refer to "all" or "none" of the members of a group.

Be sure to distinguish between essential information and unessential, peripheral information. That is to say, in a real test question, the example above ("all contracts are legal" and "all contracts are two-sided agreements") would appear in a longer, full-fledged paragraph. It would be up to you to separate the essential information from its context, and then to realize that a response choice that states "some two-sided agreements are legal" represents a valid inference and hence the correct answer.

Sample questions 3 and 4 are examples of the reading questions in the test.

3. The Supreme Court's power to invalidate legislation that violates the Constitution is a strong restriction on the powers of Congress. If an Act of Congress is deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, then the Act is voided. Unlike a presidential veto, which can be overridden by a two-thirds vote of the House and the Senate, a constitutional ruling by the Supreme Court must be accepted by the Congress.

**The paragraph best supports the statement that**

- A) if an Act of Congress is voided, then it has been deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court
- B) if an Act of Congress has not been voided, then it has not been deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court
- C) if an Act of Congress has not been deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, then it is voided
- D) if an Act of Congress is deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, then it is not voided
- E) if an Act of Congress has not been voided, then it has been deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court

● The correct answer is response B. The essential information from which the answer is to be inferred is contained in the second sentence, which states that if an Act of Congress has been deemed unconstitutional, then it is voided. In B, we are told that an Act of Congress is not voided; therefore, we can conclude that *it has not been deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.*

● Response A is not supported by the paragraph because the paragraph does not indicate whether an Act of Congress is voided *only* when it has been deemed unconstitutional or if it could be voided for other reasons.

● Response C, like response A, cannot be inferred from the paragraph because the paragraph does not indicate whether or not an Act of Congress would be voided if the Supreme Court did not declare it to be unconstitutional.

● Responses D and E are incorrect because they both contradict the paragraph.

Note that in this question, the correct answer follows basically from one sentence in the paragraph--the second sentence. The rest of the paragraph presents additional information about the relationship between the Supreme Court and the Congress, which is relevant to the discussion, but *not* necessary to make the inference. Part of your task in the Reading section is to *understand* what you read, and then to *discern* what conclusions follow logically from statements in the paragraph. Consequently, in this test, you will find some questions in which it is necessary to use all or most of the statements presented in the paragraph, while in others, such as this one, only one statement is needed to infer the correct answer.

4. All child-welfare agencies are organizations that seek to promote the healthy growth and development of children. Supplying or supplementing family income so that parents can maintain a home for their children is usually the first such service to be provided. In addition to programs of general family relief, some special programs for broken families are offered when parental care is temporarily or permanently unavailable.

**The paragraph best supports the statement that**

- A) it is not true that some organizations that seek to promote the healthy growth and development of children are child-welfare agencies
- B) some programs offered when parental care is temporarily or permanently unavailable are not special programs for broken families
- C) it is not true that no special programs for broken families are offered when temporary or permanent parental care is unavailable
- D) all programs offered when parental care is temporarily or permanently unavailable are special programs for broken families
- E) some organizations that seek to promote the healthy growth and development of children are not child-welfare agencies

● The correct answer is response C. The answer can be inferred from the last sentence in the paragraph, which states that *some special programs for broken families are offered when parental care is temporarily or permanently unavailable*. If this statement is true, then its negation, *no special programs for broken families are offered when temporary or permanent parental care is unavailable* cannot be true.

● Response A is incorrect because it contradicts the first sentence of the paragraph.

● Responses B and D cannot be validly inferred because the paragraph does not provide sufficient information to support the inferences made. Specifically, for response B, there is insufficient information to determine whether some programs offered when parental care is temporarily or permanently unavailable are *not* special programs for families. As far as response D is concerned, the paragraph does not state that *all* programs offered when parental care is temporarily or permanently unavailable are special programs for broken families.

● Response E is wrong because the paragraph states that *all child-welfare agencies are organizations that seek to promote the healthy growth and development of children*. There is no way of knowing from this statement whether or not there are organizations, other than child-welfare agencies, that seek to promote the healthy growth and welfare of children.

## **PART B: TABULAR COMPLETION AND ARITHMETIC REASONING**

The total time allotted to Part B is 50 minutes. Part B will consist of ten tabular completion questions and fifteen arithmetic reasoning questions. It should take you no more than 15 minutes to answer the tabular completion questions, which would leave you 35 minutes for the arithmetic reasoning questions. Some problems in Part B may be solved by more than one method. When this is the case, use whatever method is fastest and easiest for you. Keep in mind, however, that each question has only **one** correct answer. If you finish Part B before the allotted time is over, you should review your answers in both the Tabular Completion and Arithmetic Reasoning sections, especially any answers about which you were uncertain. *The use of calculators will NOT be permitted during the actual test; therefore, they should not be used to solve these sample questions.*

## TABULAR COMPLETION QUESTIONS

These questions are based on information presented in tables. Only *two* sample questions of this type appear below, although, in the actual test, you will have to find *five* unknown values in each table. You must calculate these unknown values by using the known values given in the table. In some questions, the exact answer will not be given as one of the response choices. In such cases, you should select response E, "none of these." Sample questions 5 and 6, which are based on the accompanying table, are examples of the tabular completion questions in this test.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES OF FINANCES:  
1979 to 1982  
(In millions of dollars)

ITEM	1979	1980	1981	1982	
				TOTAL	PERCENT*
<b>Expenditures</b> .....	ⓐ	432,328	485,174	520,966	100.0
Direct General Expenditures .....	326,024	367,340	405,576	ⓓ	83.2
Utility and Liquor Stores .....	30,846	ⓑ	43,016	47,970	9.2
Water and electric .....	20,734	24,244	28,453	31,499	6.0
Transit and others .....	10,112	11,947	14,563	16,471	3.2
Insurance Trust Expenditure .....	23,504	28,797	36,582	39,466	ⓔ
Employee retirement .....	12,273	14,008	ⓓ	17,835	3.4
Unemployment compensation .....	11,231	14,789	20,887	21,631	4.2

Hypothetical data.

\*Rounded to one decimal place.

5. What is the value of I in millions of dollars?

- A) 380,374
- B) 377,604
- C) 356,870
- D) 349,528
- E) none of these

The answer is A. It can be calculated by adding the values for *Direct General Expenditures*, *Utility and Liquor Stores*, and *Insurance Trust Expenditure*. Numerically,  $326,024 + 30,846 + 23,504 = 380,374$ .

6. What is the value of II in millions of dollars?

- A) 338,543
- B) 64,988
- C) 53,041
- D) 40,744
- E) none of these

The answer is E. The correct value (not given as an answer) is calculated by adding the value for *Water and electric* and the value for *Transit and others*. Numerically,  $24,244 + 11,947 = 36,191$ .

## ARITHMETIC REASONING QUESTIONS

In this part of the test you will have to solve problems formulated in both verbal and numeric form. You will have to analyze a paragraph in order to set up the problem, and then solve it. If the exact answer is not given as one of the response choices, you should select response E, "none of these." Sample questions 7 and 8 are examples of the arithmetic reasoning questions in this test.

7. It takes two typists three 8-hour work days to type a report on a word processor. How many typists would be needed to type two reports of the same length in one 8-hour work day?
- A) 4
  - B) 6
  - C) 8
  - D) 12
  - E) none of these

The correct answer is D. It can be obtained by computing the following:

$$3 \times 2 \times 2 = X$$

The left side of the equation represents the total number of 8-hour work days of typing required for the two reports: three days times two typists times two reports equals 12 8-hour work days of typing. If all of this had to be accomplished in one 8-hour work day, 12 typists would be needed to do the job.

Responses A, B, and C are the result of erroneous computations.

8. A clerk is able to process 40 unemployment compensation claims in one hour. After deductions of 18% for benefits and taxes, the clerk's net pay is \$6.97 per hour. If the clerk processed 1,200 claims, how much would the Government have to pay for the work, based on the clerk's hourly wage *before* deductions?
- A) \$278.80
  - B) \$255.00
  - C) \$246.74
  - D) \$209.10
  - E) none of these

The correct answer is B. It can be obtained by computing the following:

$$1) .82S = 6.97 \quad \text{and} \quad 2) 1200/40 \times S = Y$$

The clerk's net pay of \$6.97 per hour represents .82 of his/her gross pay ( $100\% - 18\% = 82\%$  or .82). Solving equation 1 we find that the clerk's hourly salary (S) before deductions is \$8.50. Substituting this figure in equation 2, we compute the total number of hours of work involved (1200 forms divided by 40 forms per hour equals 30 hours of work), and then multiply 30 hours by an hourly wage of \$8.50 to get \$255.00, the amount the Government would have to pay for the work.

Responses A, C, and D are the result of erroneous computations.



## ***THE INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT RECORD (IAR)***

The *Individual Achievement Record* is a multiple-choice questionnaire about your experience, skills, and achievements in school, employment, and other activities. This questionnaire is based on research on the actual characteristics of successful people in professional and administrative occupations. It is designed to supplement the written test by giving a broader perspective on your qualifications for a wide range of jobs. For each question, you will be asked to select the most accurate description of yourself from among the choices given.

The *IAR* does not penalize you if you have not gone to college or have no previous work experience, but rather, credits you with how well you have made use of your opportunities.

The *IAR* is completed in the examination room. You should answer the questions to the best of your recollection. Since the questions deal with your experience and skills, special preparation is not needed. However, you should think about and be familiar with your high school and college grades, other academic achievements and activities, and your work experience and work achievements.

★ U.S. Government Printing Office : 1990 - 271-536/53086

